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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Monday, February 4, 1935.

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "Chasing Shadows." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics.  
U. S. D. A.

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The poets have written many lovely verses about shadows. You'll remember poems about twilight shadows, the shadows on the lawn, the shadow that falls on castle walls, and so on. These are nice thoughts for a summer day when you're in a poetic frame of mind. But anyone who is busy doing housework, especially in a dark winter day, is more likely to appreciate the little verse that begins:

"I have a little shadow that goes in and out with me  
And what can be the use of him is more than I can see."

And that's putting it mildly. For that little shadow can be worse than useless. It can be a nuisance, an irritating pest dogging your footsteps and hampering your work. For example, it can give you all sorts of trouble in the kitchen. If it falls on the worktable, as it does when you stand in your own light, it may cause you to cut your finger or peel the potatoes too thick. At the stove it may let you put too much salt in the soup or burn the waffles. And at the sink that mean shadow may keep you from washing the dishes clean.

But that's only a beginning of the mischief it can make around the house. A shadow on the bathroom mirror may cause Father to start off for the office half shaved, or let Marjory Ann go to the dance with twice as much pink on her left as her right cheek. Shadows in the living room may let Grandma drop stitches in the socks she's knitting, give Mother a headache at her darning, and Willie eyestrain from his homework. Anything from dust in the corner to a broken leg on the cellar stairs can be traced to shadows in the wrong place.

So you see why the experts who are interested these days in improving homes -- in making happy, comfortable, efficient households, have declared war on troublesome shadows. And they'll tell you that there's no time better than a dark day in February to start driving them from your house.

Take those kitchen shadows we were talking about. You'll be well acquainted with them if you happen to have a dark kitchen, a room with dark walls or too small a window, or one that is lighted at night only by a forlorn bulb dangling at the end of a wire from the middle of the ceiling. A hanging center-light like that means that you are always standing in your own light, no matter what job you're doing. But the remedy for the situation is simple. Be sure you have a bulb that's bright enough. Then raise it right up to the ceiling, and shade it with a surrounding globe, so that it will throw comfortable light on all parts of the room equally, instead of throwing it at your back. If your



window is small, be sure you have light curtains -- or none at all, and a light shade to let in every bit of daylight that will come. And keep your window clean. Grease, dust and soot on a pane can cut out a good deal of light. As the kitchen experts say, "A clean window and thin light-colored curtains diffuse light and soften shadows."

These experts also make a big point of keeping electric light bulbs clean. In fact, they have figured out that if all lamps in American homes were washed and all ceilings washed or painted a light color the same day, the amount of illumination would be doubled that night. No use paying for electric light that is lost in dirt. In other words, "Water is cheaper than watts."

As for shadows on mirrors, they're also easy to drive away. See that the light falls on you rather than behind you, or on the mirror. Place lamps at the wall on either side of the mirror so you can see both sides of your face. For daytime use, the best location for a mirror is between two windows.

The living room is one room in the house where you really need different kinds of illumination for the most comfort. For one thing, you need direct lamps to read and sew by -- floor or table lamps. These should stand behind and to the left of chairs to give sufficient light and drive away shadows. Of course, you know how important it is to have all lamps shaded. And the shades should be deep enough to conceal the bulb from the eyes even of a person sitting very near the lamp, and broad enough to throw a wide circle of light. Yes, and they should be light enough in color to reflect light well yet thick enough to cut down any sharp glare. Haven't you noticed that cream or yellow shades give a warm glowing light, and that a white lining in the shade gives off more light? Dark-colored shades aren't successful because they absorb light and give shadows and "spotty" lighting. Of course, light colored walls and ceilings in the living room will help drive away shadows. Now for a general diffused comfortable light, you'll want a central ceiling light or an indirect lamp that throws light up and lets it come down from the ceiling -- the nearest effect of sunshine indoors that I know of. Of course, any indirect lamp needs a light ceiling and upper walls to reflect rays.

The New York State Health Department recently made a study of the eyes of children in public schools. That study showed that twenty percent of elementary school children have faulty eyesight and that this percent increases in the upper schools. That's one reason why Willie should have a good light at home for reading or study or any close work. The report also showed more defective vision among country children than those in the city. The experts think this is because city homes have better artificial light.

Well, for safety as well as convenience, there's one more place in your house that you'll do well to drive out shadows. This is on the stairway. Have the light in the upper hall ceiling placed so that no shadow will fall on the stairs. And the same for the light for the cellar stairs, and for the front and back porch steps.

How about joining the gloom-chasers, and starting a fight against household shadows?



